

# The School Board Corner

By Ed Sullivan, George Washington District  
November 2005

As you read this School Board Corner, we will have just finished another election, and the make-up of the School Board will be changed, as we will have some new Board members. I hope you were able to see past the politics and hoopla that seems to come with every election, and you voted for whom you felt would serve our children best.

It is now time to refocus and move on to do the best for the children of Stafford County. For those of you who don't know me, I am Ed Sullivan from the George Washington District. I have been on the Board longer than any other member, and I have seen a lot of changes. Despite the editorials and political chatter, this Board is the most approachable, caring board that I have ever served with over the past few years. This Board has established many advisory boards; parent, student, and teacher roundtables; and public hearings for every major decision the Board has made. We have listened to every group and, in many cases, have changed direction based on public input. Obviously, we cannot please everyone all of the time, but I honestly believe this Board tries very hard.

The purpose of this column is to disburse information and answer questions from parents and others. We, as a Board, have taken turns writing this monthly column in an attempt to keep everyone informed. We believe many times problems arise because people are uninformed or misinformed. Often parents are confused as to where to go for information or help. Because we are growing so rapidly, I felt it might be helpful to explain the chain of command and the paths to follow if you have a problem.

The best solution is always to try to resolve the problem at the lowest level possible. It is important to realize the chain of command and follow it, which is Teacher – Principal – Cognizant Department (e.g., Transportation) – Superintendent – School Board. Of course where you start depends on the type of problem you have and, if it would require a change in policy, then it would have to be settled by the School Board.

It is important to remember that a School Board member has no power as an individual – only as a group meeting in its official capacity does a School Board acquire its power. The Board is responsible for making all school policies, managing school property, and all hiring and firing. The Superintendent enforces Board policies and is responsible for the everyday operations of the school system; however he or she has no authority to change, waive, or grant exemptions to School Board policy, which is reserved solely for the School Board. Similarly, a principal enforces policy at the building level; however, he or she has no authority to change or waive policy.

Having said all that, we as a Board always welcome your thoughts and ideas and encourage you to call or email us with any problem. We will always give you direction and may suggest you start at some other point but will always attempt to help you resolve a problem.

We meet the second and fourth Tuesdays of most months - once during the summer months and December. We always have time at the beginning of Board meetings to hear from the public. In addition, we hold numerous public hearings on the budget and other major operational areas. We also have many advisory boards, including Long-term Planning, Attendance Zones, Health, Technology, Multicultural, Special Education, and many more. If you are interested in serving on any of these committees, please contact your Board member.

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